

Primates as Pets: NOT IN MICHIGAN!

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1. Primates should not be Pets

Primates belong in their native habitat. These wild animals can be dangerous and should not be kept as pets in private homes. Due to the close genetic relationship between nonhuman primates and humans, disease causing organisms are easily exchanged between them. Primates pose a significant risk to the community when kept as pets. The average pet owner cannot provide the specialized care, diet and housing needed by captive primates. The pet trade contributes to the mistreatment and even extinction of many primate species.

2. Problems with Primate Ownership

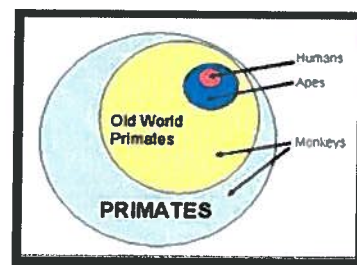
Most non-human primates come from tropical or subtropical regions of the Americas, Africa and Asia. They range in size from a tiny lemur weighing 1 oz., to the gorilla, who weighs over 440 lbs. Non-human primates include monkeys and apes. Primates are among the most social of animals, forming pairs or family groups. They have advanced cognitive abilities, mature slowly, and live long lives. The International Union for Conservation of Nature lists more than a third of primates as critically endangered or vulnerable.

Close interactions between humans and non-human primates can expose humans to such dangerous diseases as Herpes, monkey pox, yellow fever, tuberculosis, measles, Ebola, rabies, the Marburg virus and viral hepatitis. The U.S.D.A. does not regulate private ownership of primates and only provides licenses to breeders, exhibitors, contract transporters, and researchers. Private ownership regulation is therefore up to each state. Only dogs (not primates) qualify as service animals under the federal Americans with Disabilities Act.

Estimates of the number of primates owned in the United States range from 3,000 to 15,000, the most common being monkeys. Although primate import for the pet trade was banned in the U.S. in 1975, smuggling still occurs along the United States – Mexico border, with prices ranging from \$3000 for monkeys to \$30,000 for apes. Larger primates (over 11 lbs.) are at increased extinction risk due to their greater profitability to poachers compared to smaller primates. Many species have become extinct in the recent past because of poaching and other pressures.



Primates require professional, well-managed care. They are susceptible to both transmitting diseases to humans and contracting diseases from humans.



Pet primates, usually purchased as infants, are often mutilated by having their teeth and fingernails removed to be rendered less dangerous.

3. Recent Cases

In October 2011 police in Zanesville, Ohio, killed 49 exotic animals, including wolves, lions, bears and 18 Bengal tigers. Their debt-ridden owner was said to have flung open their cages moments before he shot himself. Ohio was one of seven states with no regulation regarding the sale or ownership of these types of creatures. Only 18 states currently have an outright ban on exotic animals as pets; other states require owners to obtain proper permits. While the private ownership of large carnivores (lions, leopards, jaguars, tigers, cougars, panthers, cheetahs, and bears) was prohibited in Michigan in 2000 by the Large Carnivore Act (PA 274), the private ownership of non-human primates remains legal and unregulated in our state.

Recent Examples of Primate Cases:

- In 2009, a "pet" chimpanzee severely mauled and permanently disfigured a woman in Connecticut before being shot and killed.
- A "pet" capuchin monkey had to be quarantined at his Florida home in October of 2012 until he could be cleared of all viruses after biting a man on the shin.
- In September 2012, also in Florida, a "pet" monkey escaped his backyard cage for two hours and bit and scratched two people. This was his second escape in the past 2 months.
- A Javan macaque kept illegally as a pet in California bit a woman caring for it causing severe injuries on her arm and finger in September 2012. The macaque was kept in a small dog crate inside the couple's trailer and was being fed Frosted Flakes.

4. Ending Private Primate Ownership in Michigan

In early 2013, Rep. Andrew Kandrevas introduced HB 4300, which would ban the private ownership of non-human primates by outlawing new ownership of non-human primate species. It would grandfather existing primates so people who currently have them can keep them; but prohibit importation, breeding, and sale or transfer of primates.

Michigan law already prohibits the private ownership of many dangerous wild animals. Non-human primates should be added to this list. Join Michigan Humane Society in supporting HB 4300 to ensure that these magnificent wild animals only reside in accredited zoos and other similar settings where they will receive the care they need, and will not pose a threat to humans. Preserving primates in their natural habitat depends in part on ending the exotic pet trade in these species, which in turn depends on banning pet ownership.



“Primates and other exotic animals are a public safety risk when kept as pets, as shown by the tragic accident that occurred in my home state of Connecticut.”

Richard Blumenthal, D-Connecticut, co-sponsor of the federal Captive Primate Safety Act (S. 1324).



Primates kept as pets have been responsible for several attacks on humans. Many primates suffer inadequate care in pet homes and end up in primate sanctuaries in the U.S. as a result of cruelty cases.